

Calendar No. 1963

82D CONGRESS
2d Session

SENATE

REPORT
No. 1991

PROVIDING FOR THE TRANSFER OF CERTAIN LANDS, AND INTERESTS IN LANDS, AT MILL ROCK ISLAND IN THE EAST RIVER, N. Y.

JULY 1 (legislative day, JUNE 27), 1952.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. McCLELLAN, from the Committee on Government Operations,
submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 6129]

The Committee on Government Operations, to whom was referred H. R. 6129, to convey certain surplus Government property to the city of New York, having considered the same, report favorably thereon, without amendment, and recommend that the bill do pass. The bill, as amended, passed the House of Representatives June 2, 1952.

PURPOSE

H. R. 6129 directs the General Services Administrator to convey, without reimbursement, to the city of New York for park purposes only all right, title, and interest in all real estate known as Mill Rock Island in the East River at New York City, subject to the reversion provisions hereafter described in this report. The transfer has the approval of all Federal agencies affected and of both Senators Irving M. Ives and Herbert H. Lehman of New York.

HISTORY OF MILL ROCK ISLAND

Mill Rock Island embraces 8.6 acres of land located in the East River opposite Ninety-third Street, New York City. The property was acquired by the United States Government in 1911 at a cost of \$25,000 for the purpose of improving navigation on the East River. It was subsequently used by the United States Corps of Engineers as the base for their river, harbor, and marine operations within the New York metropolitan area. On June 8, 1950, after the United States engineers had transferred their New York area operations base

to Caven Point, N. J., Mill Rock Island was reported to the General Services Administration for disposition as surplus property. At that time improvements consisted of 10 miscellaneous structures including gage houses, storehouses, repair shops and, in addition, two Coast Guard navigation lights. GSA appraises the current value of the entire property, including improvements, at \$84,961.

AFFECTED GOVERNMENT AGENCIES APPROVE TRANSFER

The Bureau of the Budget, the General Services Administration, the Department of the Army, representing the United States Corps of Engineers, and the Treasury Department, on behalf of the Coast Guard, which operates the navigation lights, each approves of the transfer, subject to the two provisions which follow: (1) An amendment providing for reversion of Mill Rock Island to the United States in the event that the Secretary of Defense should determine that the installation is necessary for the national defense during a state of war or emergency, and (2) an amendment to reserve to the United States title to the two Coast Guard marine navigation lights, including plots of land 25 feet square surrounding each, together with the rights of ingress and egress as may be necessary to maintain them.

Appropriate provisions to accomplish these purposes are incorporated in H. R. 6129 as it passed the House.

CONCLUSION

Reports of all Government agencies concerned indicate that the United States has no further interest in Mill Rock Island except as provided in the amendments described above. The United States Corps of Engineers has granted a temporary lease of the property to the city of New York in exchange for the granting, without consideration, of park sites having a total rental value of approximately \$140,000 per year to the Department of the Army for the placement of anti-aircraft batteries at strategic locations within New York City. The island has negligible commercial value except for the possible erection of advertising structures, which would be in violation of the city's zoning laws.

The committee concludes, therefore, that the transfer of this surplus Government property to the city of New York for park purposes only, with the House amendments, would be in the public interest, and recommends that H. R. 6129 do pass.

The following are pertinent excerpts from a letter addressed to the committee by Robert Moses, Commissioner, city of New York, Department of Parks, in support of the bill:

COMMITTEE ON EXPENDITURES,

United States Senate, Capitol, Washington 25, D. C.

GENTLEMEN: * * * Mill Rock is located in the center of the confluence of the Harlem and East Rivers. It is the most conspicuous landmark from the recently completed park at the south end of Ward's Island, from Carl Schurz Park, the Mayor's House and the East River Drive and Promenade from Eightieth to Ninetieth Streets, and from Astoria Houses and the water-front park development along the Queens shore to the east.

There is no public commercial water frontage from which any industrial or utilitarian use of this island could be serviced economically. The tidal currents would make ferry service hazardous, and the only conceivable private use of this property would be as a support for a gigantic advertising structure, which would

be in violation of zoning and building laws. In spite of the obvious negligible commercial value of this property, the General Services Administration has stated that it is appraised at \$85,000 and therefore cannot be released to the city of New York except by the proposed Federal legislation.

Shortly after negotiations for transfer of this island to the city had been commenced, the city park department was approached by officers of the Army Anti-Aircraft Command and representatives of the Real Estate Division of the Army Engineers with a request for sites for the placement of anti-aircraft batteries at a number of locations in the city park system. Permits were issued without delay for the operation of trucks carrying experimental equipment over parkways and in other restricted areas to permit the determination of suitable sites for these installations. Finally, nine sites in parks were selected as suitable and agreements were executed between the city and the Army giving these sites without consideration. It was pointed out to the Army Engineers that the total fair rental value of these sites amounted to approximately \$140,000 per year. However, the Real Estate Division of the Army Engineers assured the city that Mill Rock would be released at no cost to the city, and as further evidence of their sincerity, a temporary lease of the property was granted at no cost to the city by the Department of the Army. The city, in turn, released the desired anti-aircraft battery sites at no charge to the Government and even included free water, sewage, and garbage collection services.

It is only equitable that the Government effectuate the arrangement by enacting the proposed legislation. I therefore urge that your committee report favorably on this bill. * * *

Very truly yours,

(Signed) R. MOSES, *Commissioner*.



